

The Patterns of the Nomad in Buryat Urban Culture

Abstract

The nomadic mode of life among Buryats no longer exists. It was devastated in the epoch of the Soviet Union by forced sedentarization and collectivization. However, the figure of the nomad is still present in the various arts. Contemporarily, the figure of the nomad has started to appear in pop culture. In this research article, I will prove the nomad as a reference point for constructing a new urban identity among Buryats. I will focus mainly on lyrics, primarily in rap songs, because hip-hop is comprehended as urban phenomena. The challenge of revitalizing Buryat collective identity requires finding new symbols, that strongly impact on the people and allow them to self-identify with it. The Nomad, man of the steppe, fulfils these conditions. It connects past with present and demonstrates the Buryat affiliation to the Mongol Civilization. Additionally, everyone can be a nomad, contrary to national heroes who have defined personalities. Therefore, it is a good point of reference. The modern nomad is an effect of forming new Buryat identity in urban condition.

Keywords: Buryatia, ethnic revival, urban culture, modern music, nomadism, nomad

The paper investigates the role of urban culture in the transmission of cultural tradition in contemporary Buryat society inhabited in Ulan-Ude. I analyse the development of rap music performed in the Buryat language. Knowledge of the Buryat language decreased due to Soviet modernization as Russian was a way to an obtain education and to become the modernised. Contemporary cultural activists, religious and political leaders attempt to disseminate aboriginal language within the society. This process contains bottom-up elements, which is evidenced by the participation of actors unconnected to elites and policymakers. Buryat rap creates and transmits idyllic interpretations of the traditional culture. The lyrics refer to the imagination about the life of pre-revolutionary Buryat societies. Rap songs relocate the figure of a nomad from the steppe to urban reality. The investi-

gation will check which elements of the imagination about a nomadic mode of life are used and what their role is in the lyrics. Firstly, I will sketch the current status of the Buryat language in the urbanscape. Secondly, I will indicate why the language of ancestors is crucial in shamanistic practices. Finally, I will demonstrate how elements of traditions are transmitted in musical lyrics.

The native language in the urbanscape

In 2017 I spent a month in Ulan-Ude. It was August and the average daytime temperature was about 40 degrees Celsius – not pleasant in the city, but conducive to holiday rest. Many people had left the city, for the shore of Lake Baikal or to villages, where they have relatives. Simultaneously, plenty of foreign and Russian tourists attracted by Buddhism and shamanism came to Ulan-Ude. Due to the hot weather, I avoided leaving my friends' house, and set up all in the evenings. On one day I had to visit the shopping mall “Eurozone” in the centre of the city at midday. It is a place where one can find many market stalls, regular stores, pubs, restaurants, and other spaces dedicated to consumption, entertainment, and leisure. Upon leaving the shopping mall, I was exposed to an unexpected kind of music. The speakers played some tracks by Hathur Zu, the first Buryat hip-hop group, which started to record rap in their own language.¹ I was used to hearing this music in night clubs, but not in public spaces in the middle of the day. Therefore I started to think about what is going on with pop culture inspired by Buryat traditions. Even the status of the Buryat language was intriguing because I had a feeling that many people communicate in Buryat. On my first visit to Ulan-Ude in 2015, many of my interlocutors claimed that they have not knowledge of the native language.

A few days later, I went to the outskirts of Ulan-Ude with my friend. When I saw the strange billboard, I asked:

- What is written there? Do you know what is *delgüür*?
- Yep, it means *store* in Buryat – she answered.

¹ Usage of the Buryat language opens the possibility to participate in musician projects amongst artists from the various Mongolian groups. Examples can be collaborations like Az Jargal (2014), Toonot (2018), which are an effect of the collaboration between artists from Buryatia, Inner Mongolia, Kalmykia, Mongolia and Tuva. Also, the extended play record released by Big Gee, the Mongolian rapper, was an attempt to underline the unity of the Mongolian groups and allude to the cultural reinterpretation of Pan-Mongolism (Szczap 2019). Previously, Pan-Mongolism was the political movement postulating the unification of all of the Mongolian groups and founding the independent state. Modern Pan-Mongolism bases on cultural exchange and transborder cooperation. It loses the political dimension (Szmyt 2020: 136).

² I used transliteration according to the English language standard BGN/PCGN. In the cases of the Buryat language, I decided to apply translation Mongolian-English, because the Buryat language belongs to the Mongolic language family.

- How is it possible that you know it? I supposed you don't speak Buryat!
- I don't, but I understand a lot. My parents mocked that I had a strange accent when I was trying to speak. I felt ashamed. Now I cannot talk, but I understand a sense.

We planned to go to Irkutsk by hitchhiking. On our way we switched cars twice. In the second car, driver and passenger had a conversation between each other in Buryat. That was shocking to me because, over the last two years since my first visit to Buryatia, I have not met so many people with a command of the native language. After 2017, I noticed that those who previously claimed not to speak Buryat have started to use this language. Something has changed; perhaps it is the effect of the many programs, which support its development or a result of the activity of the 24th Khambo Lama, Damba Ayushev,³ whose efforts continue to popularize Buryat culture and language.

My thesis is that the above-mentioned changes are rooted in the process of ethnic revival and democratization of the internet. I will provide my analysis on rap music or, more precisely, on ethnic rap. Thanks to the possibility of self-publishing art, it is easier to perform some artistic experiments. Rap was created in the 1970s by Afro-Americans who lived in New York. Therefore, rap is received as urban phenomena and a way of expression characteristic for vulnerable groups. Thanks to globalization, rap music gained popularity around the world, especially in urban areas. Rap music has local features as it is created primarily by the youth and produces challenging artists, who write lyrics about their lives, problems and neighbourhoods. The first rappers in Ulan-Ude performed music in the Russian language. The idea of making urban music in the Buryat language was innovative. This type of art has become an important subject in the rescuing of the ethnic language, due to popularity among the youth. I stress that rap is characteristic of urban culture. Thanks to the use of the ethnic language and references to local culture, rap music acquires unique hallmarks.

The Buryat language is threatened, despite local policymakers, activists and ethnic leaders attempts to rescue the language from extinction. The Republic of Buryatia offers financial support for artistic projects performed in the country's ethnic language. Still, the application of the Buryat language in music is sometimes a bottom-up process – the result of internal migration from rural to urban areas. In the case of the Republic of Buryatia, one essential factor is migration from the former Agin-Buryat Autonomous Okrug (ABAO) to the Ulan-Ude. Aginskiy Buryats are recognized as a group with the most vivid traditional culture and conserved indigenous language. According to popular discourse, the most traditional groups are Shenehen Buryats, the ex-emigrants from ABAO to China (Szmyt 2011: 156). The Aginsky Buryat are one of the most active participants in

³ Khambo Lama is the religious leader of the Buddhist Traditional Sangha of Russia. Buddhism is one of the officially recognized by the state traditional religions of Russia. In the case of the Republic of the Buryatia, recognized religious systems are: Buddhism, Judaism, Orthodox, and Shamanism. Shamanism is not recognized religious in all the state, just in particular subjects of Russia.

the ethnic revival of Buryatia because of their decision to migrate to the capital city.

David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre proposed the concept of the right to the city. According to their interpretation, the right to the city means the right to command a whole urban process, which also involves the countryside (Harvey 2008: 28). Ulan-Ude can be read as a space of conflicts between different urban groups, including Russian and non-Russian inhabitants, dwellers and incomers. Zbigniew Szmyt (2020: 232–234) noticed that representatives of ethnic groups underline their right to the city by ethnicization of urban space. The process consists of place-making and a set of cultural practices aimed at undermining Russian supremacy. Ethnicization of the urban area of Ulan-Ude is a result of the changes in the ethnic structure of urban society. It is an effect of internal migration. In the 90s and at the beginning of the third millennium, speaking Buryat in public spaces was frowned upon and could even lead to violent confrontation. These urban linguistic habits were symbols characteristic of youth groups, often associated with criminality (Karbainov 2004: 171–172).

However, the role of the Buryat language began to change. It started to be used in public spaces and absorbed into popular culture. But there is also second crucial function of the Buryat language. It is essential in shamanic practices aimed at contacting ancestors. One cannot speak to one's ancestors if one does not know them, nor do Buryat ancestors speak Russian. The shaman's task is to communicate and negotiate with the spirits of ancestors (Graber, Stephen, Quijada 2015: 259). Henceforth, all Buryat shamans must know the native language and be able to recognize kin from the past. The Buryat language, as well as belief system, became distinctive features which helped to rebuild ethnonational collective identity, filling the void caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union. They are parts of re-invited traditions (Hobsbawm, Ranger 2008), which are rooted in the mode of life characteristic for the pre-revolutionary Buryatia. The Soviet brand of modernity was accessible only through belonging to the Soviet culture. Therefore, indigenous people were forced to cut themselves off from their customs, religions, language, and traditional modes of production (Skrynnikova, Batomunkuyev, Varnavskiy 2014: 5–6). Buryats also had to abandon their places of origin, where their forefathers lived.

Modern inhabitants of the Ulan-Ude use different patterns characteristic to traditional culture. Ethnicization of the cityscape embraces changes in the architecture, religious and social practices, and popular culture. I will track patterns of the nomad, often which are present in the symbolic sphere of Ulan-Ude. The nomadic model of life is an echo of the past. On the other hand, the nomad appears in the urbanized Buryatia as a legitimization of presence of Buryat groups in cities. The figure of a nomad signifies the right to the city for descendants of the Great Steppe Civilization.

Modern urban music

The Khural of the Republic of Buryatia chosen the song *About the native land*⁴ as the national anthem in 1995.⁵ The national poet of Buryatia, Damba Zhalsarayev, wrote the poem entitled *My land* for which the composer, Anatoliy Andreyev wrote the music, creating a song which soon became very popular. Before it was chosen as the anthem, it was sung on different occasions in homes, on the streets and during alcoholic refreshment, leading detractors to claim it is merely a boozy chant (Vasil'yeva 2013: 9). There are some differences between the original songs and the version used as anthem. Musicians and cultural activists created various versions and arrangements. The lyrics of the song describe the unique landscape of Buryatia, but also references some prominent elements related to the romanticized figure of the nomad:

The song About the Native Land⁶
 The land of the taiga, the lakes, and the steppes,
 Fulfilled by good sunlight.
 You are blooming from one side to another,
 Be fortunate, our native land.
 A wind of cranberry, a breath of bird cherry,
 Brew of violet labrador tea.
 I do not breathe, but I drink the fragrance,
 Of my country's plains and forests.
 The Motherland accept the gratitude from your sons,
 Regale me with the holy water of arshan.⁷
 So that I obtain unpredictable power
 For the faraway and effortful journey.
 Together with you, Motherland, we fade into unity,
 Your fate became mine.
 I bow wholeheartedly to you, native land,
 My beloved Buryatia!

The song *About the Native Land* transmits cultural code, which should be highlighted for better understanding of the phantasm of a nomad. The initial impression might be that the lyrics simply describe the landscape of Buryatia. However, it is not a simple portrayal of the visual dimension of the Buryat landscape. The lyrics stress the activity of the people and their ties with the land. The people

⁴ The anthem of Buryatia by Chingis Radnaye, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-qLWx7y7ks> (access: 11.08.2020).

⁵ <https://hural-buryatia.ru/oRB/simvol/gimn> (access: 10.08.2020).

⁶ All lyrics translated from the Russian language by the author of the article.

⁷ *Arshan* in the Buryat language means “holy spring”. This line was in the original poem. In the official version of the anthem, it sounds: “Host me the holy water of the Baikal”. Lake Baikal is recognized as the national symbol of Buryatia. Henceforth an *arshan* was replaced by the Baikal. Additionally, the term *bulag* describes regular spring without any spiritual power.

become a part of a specific landscape thanks to practice of living and inhabiting. Concurrently, the landscape becomes part of each individual person (Smyrski 2017: 142). The first two verses focus on the features of the Buryatia, which everyone can experience by senses. It surpasses eyesight because the text alludes to feeling and scent. The people and elements of nature in the poem have similar values, indicated by the verb “breath” used for the humankind and plants. Also, the Motherland is treated as the agent, which can impact on social life. It is especially noticeable in the third verse, where traditional Buryat concept of the motherland, *toonto nyutag* is referred to.

The term can be translated as “the land connected with us via navel-string (umbilical cord)”. In the traditional Buryat worldview there are unique relationships between humans and their ancestral homeland. It is a land that provides energy to the people born there. Therefore, it is essential to visit the place of one’s origins because it offers vital energy and all the people to communicate with their ancestral spirits. In the modern times, when the people from one *toonto nyutag* live in another part of the world, it is challenging to organize the ancestral sacrifice rite, *taylagan*. Once every five years, all male members of the lineage should meet up and perform the ritual to maintain the vital energy of the line (Szmyt 2020: 287–288). Accordingly the contemporary musical lyrics referring to Buryat culture and identity often consist of references to the motives of ancestors, native land, and some religious artifacts that are elements of the system of the beliefs described above. It also has a functional dimension because regular meetings help to keep contacts with relatedness up. Kinship networks are often used to obtain mutual socio-economic support for urban as well as rural relatives.

The holy spring, called *arshan*, is a source of supernatural power for nomadic people. The sentence “for the faraway and effortful journey” alludes not just to demanding peregrinations but to everyday life too. The last stave stresses the specific relationship Buryats have with the land. The traditional Buryat approach to nature is embodied in a world referred to as *baigaali*. It comes from the verb *baikha* (“to be”) and is closely related to the term *baidal* (“the way things are”, “character”). *Baigaali* is a holistic term which includes both human and non-human subjects within the environment. According to animistic ontology common for the people rooted in Buryat-Mongol culture, not only people have an agency. There are invisible, powerful beings who have an agency too. Each stream, spring or hill, has its lord in the form of a spiritual individuality called *gazarai ežen*. Within *taylagan*, the people offered a ram or horse as sacrifice to the master of the land. There are also different energies reproduced in the form of harmony within *baigaali* (Smyrski 2018: 214–217). The song *About the Native Land* is based on a framework in which the nomads functioned in the past. Contemporary, it is buoyant a piece of work, which relates to the Buryat national sentiments.

The anthem of the Republic of Buryatia is still vital for the people. It is performed not just during national holidays, sports events and official ceremonies but

also for family meetings. In 2019 I returned from Olkhon Island, where I participated in the Summer School of Social Research. A ferry is the only way to reach the island. It shuttles quite often, at least once an hour. At the ferryboat, we noticed the group of Buryats, who were dancing in a circle. They were performing a traditional dance named *yoohor*. It is a typical way to celebrate sport festivals named *naadam* and weddings. Dancing is connected with singing *yoohor's songs*. So the participants need to know the canon of such songs (Ivanov, Zhamsoyev 2020). Some of my colleagues decided to join the circle. It took only a second until all of us attempted to dance. The Buryats showed us some steps, turns of direction, moves of hips. They were singing in Buryat. I recognized *Nayan Navaa*, the song inspired by the legend about the mythical valley where Khorii-Buryats come from. I asked about the reason for the celebration. A Buryat named Chingis answered that they were coming from the wedding party. Our conversation was interrupted by a loud discussion about what song should be sung next. Someone proposed:

- Tayēzhnaya, ozērnaya, stepnaya!⁸
- What is going on? – I asked my colleague, a Russian girl originally from Kyakhta.
- Ow, there is a beautiful song, the anthem of Buryatia. You will listen to it. It is amazing – she answered.

I know it. I just wonder if you will sing it in Buryat⁹ or in Russian – I replied.

Immediately, all the members of *yoohor's* circle from Buryatia stood to attention and started to sing the anthem of the Republic. The song, not founded as a relic, imposed by authorities has become a vital part of culture for all inhabitants of Buryatia. The next generations still reinterpret the lyric. During my last stay, I heard unverified information that Buryat youths understood the third stanza as referring to those who leave Buryatia to look for a better life in wealthier regions of the world. On Internet services like YouTube numerous different arrangements can be found. Except for records from national and ethnic festivals, there are homemade videos and attempts to re-arrange the music style, including house music. In my opinion, one of the most important experiments with the song *About the Native Land* was undertaken by Aldar “Alihan Dze” Dugaron.¹⁰

The rapper from ex-Agin-Buryat Autonomous Okrug made use of the *Tayēzhnaya, ozērnaya, stepnaya* in two ways. Firstly, he made the sample, which he used

⁸ *Tayēzhnaya, ozērnaya, stepnaya* the first words of the anthem of Buryatia, are usually used as the alternative title of the song.

⁹ The original lyric was in Russian. It was translated on Buryat, but in fact it is entirely new writing. For example, in the Buryat lyric there is the verse: “With Sayan’s snowy zephyrs make us purer”. The Buryat-English translation is available here: <http://baikalfund.ru/mediacache/d5041ad4-a8e8-430a-8147-3df39b10f13e.pdf> (“Mir Baykala” vol. 2 (38), p. 8, access: 15.10.2020).

¹⁰ Aldar “Alihan Dze” Dugaron and Sergey “Songol” Biliktuev established first hip-hop collective, named Hathur Zu, which performed rap music in the Buryat language. Interested in applying aboriginal language was undertaken by other artists, for instance Alagui or T808. More details in the video: https://vk.com/video-55382731_456245280 (access: 28.11.2020).

in two tracks. The first of them was entitled *Tayëzhnaya, ozërnaya, stepnaya* (row demo).¹¹ In terms of the lyrics the song is a tribute to the anthem of Buryatia:

The road between lakes and steppes,
I don't close eyes till all hours, I recognize you.
Flowers will cover parchment from one side to another,
Native land fulfilled by sunlight.

The second track is entitled *Magtal* (The Ode). At the beginning and the end, it used samples from the song *About the Native Land*. The lyrics of this song also focus on the relationship with the native land. However, unlike in the original anthem, the song references to the difficult economic situation in Ulan-Ude, especially among the youth. A. Dugaron, together with Sergey "Songol" Biliktuev, established a collective Hathur Zu, which no longer exists. Their songs are often related to Buryat culture and the patterns of a nomad.

Initially, they used samples from Buryat folk music, with instruments like the *morin*,¹² throat-singing *khoomei*, which is a part of a broader trend in the ethnic music in Siberia and Inner Asia. Secondly, their lyrics are rooted in nomadic heritage. For example, the song *Nayan Navaa*¹³ is a tribute to the time of childhood, which both musicians spent in the villages in the steppe. The text refers to the motives of *Tengeri* (Eternal Blue Sky) and the connection to their native land. There is also an element of union between each of the Buryat groups: "Pronunciation is not important, *nayan-navaa* or *ayan-avaa*. Let's reminisce your home and splash a tea each morning. Always remember, everyone has a native land."¹⁴

The lyrics of Hathur Zu often reference the past and history. The song *Buyan* (The Fortune) is a reliable example:

People were made brainless as rams
Forced to forget the path of ancestors, homeland, and history
The state needs people who don't think with their heads
Then will not be unnecessary questions.

In the Buryat tradition, ancestors and homeland play a key role in the formation of the identity of individuals and clans. In traditional Buryat culture there are no practices related to visiting graveyards, but the worship of antecedents is strongly developed. Additionally, shamanism facilitates maintaining relationships with forebears, who are active in the social realm. These dead relatives can be summoned during rituals, henceforth there is no need to actively visit graveyards.

¹¹ Alihan Dze, *Tayëzhnaya, ozërnaya, stepnaya* (row demo), <https://soundcloud.com/user-993384045/alihan-dze-taezhnaya-ozernaya-row-demo> (access: 18.10.2020).

¹² *Morin* ("a horse") is a two-strings instrument characteristic for all of the Mongolian groups.

¹³ According to believes, *Nayan Navaa* is the mythical homeland of Khori Buryats, where they will escape in the time of apocalypse.

¹⁴ Album Hathur Zu entitled *Dzam* (The Road) available here: https://vk.com/music/playlist/-29964084_21515691 (access: 15.10.2020).

The worship of ancestors is an element characteristic to nomadic culture, which is also transmitted in lyrics of popular songs. Hip-hop music usually alludes to the present: “In the crowds, my family is always with me. The gift from the Eternal Blue Sky – house, hitching post, horse, and saddle”.¹⁵ Although horse racing is one of the national sports, together with archery and wrestling *buhe barildaan*, the urban inhabitants are not suspected of developing skills in these activities. The motives of horseback riders, saddles, hitching posts, romanticized mode of nomadic life are typical for Buryat literature in the broader context and express mixed Eurasian identity, where shamanistic mythology, Buddhist philosophy, and European culture become coexistent (Dondukova 2019: 11–13, 175).

The Hope

The most significant piece of urban music, which connects many elements of the Buryat identity, is the track *Naidal* (The Hope)¹⁶ recorded by S. “Songol” Biliktuev. It starts with the first and the fifth stanzas of the Enhe Noroev’s poem written in 2012:¹⁷

My Buryatia cries bitter tears.
Her brave and strong sons,
They don’t respect their ancestors at all.
Lonely mothers bring them up.
We don’t remember our ancestors anymore.
We forgot about those who boasted our nation.
We were used to be stronger together,
For now, I don’t know what will sustain us in the future.

The entire track is dedicated to maintaining Buryat ethnonational identity and history. Buryatia is treated as a female and the mother. Therefore Biliktuev sings: “The only female can be compared to my motherland – The endless windy steppe, where is always silence”. It is crucial to understand that in this context the steppe is connected with the past and worship of ancestors. Remembering their history is a way for Buryats to find themselves as a nation in a modern, urbanized world. Moreover, the close relationship between femininity and Buryatia is visible in the symbolic sphere of Ulan-Ude. In 2008 the monument “Mother of Buryatia” was

¹⁵ Alihan Dze, *Dulaan shinii* (Your warmth), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYtADwHthuk> (access: 15.10.2020).

¹⁶ Songol, *Naidal* (The Hope), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLbZvHFtsnw> (access: 16.10.2020).

Paweł Szczap, during the workshop “Kinship and Urbanization in Inner Asia”, noticed music video was inspired by Big Gee’s song entitled *Miniy nutgiyg nadad üldee*. However, in my opinion in Biliktuev’s video the concept of walking and discovering items seems to be more developed.

¹⁷ <http://asiarussia.ru/news/14887/> (access: 16.10.2020).

endowed in the centre of the city at Smolina Street. The sculpture of a woman dressed in traditional Buryat *degel* welcomes the guests. It holds in its hands a scarf called *khadag*, which symbolizes hospitality.

The music video addresses the problem of lack of historically awareness amongst Buryats and the consolidation of contemporary Buryats as a nation. The video shows a crowd of young people with tape over their mouths, walking like zombies. Among them is an old man who tries to awake them. Suddenly, he discovers the bones of a ram in the ground, an *erih*,¹⁸ a newspaper “Buryad-Mongol Unen”¹⁹ from 1948, photographs of nomadic families, a paper with vertical Buryat writing. According to the Songol himself, the discovered items symbolize history, religion, and writing, which are the elements that are substantial for the unification of every nation.²⁰ When the crowd noticed what the older man finds, they start to pummel him and stamp on the discovered things. They leave the old man with injuries and at the last moment, he opens eyes and winks at a youth with a shovel who excavates the items again. This video can be understood as a metaphor for ethnic revival, which could successfully resuscitate the collective Buryat identity and language.

Moreover, Biliktuev defines contemporary Buryats as the people of the steppe: “He is without faith, he is without hope. The man of steppe became heartless, he lost his face”. A similar approach to the Buryat identity and collective memory is visible in the work of A. Dugaron. His tribute to the song *About Native Land* represents an analogous way of thinking:

People have become slicker than their ancestors, stopped gratitude them.
Time passes, the people go, but they don't know where,
And it is improbable that your holy water is still significant for them.
The seventh-generation has become something strange.

According to traditional Buryat culture, the crucial thing is knowing ones patrilinear ancestors for seven generations (Askhayeva 2004). The ancestors play key role because they act as protectors of the lineage. However, if they become evil spirits, they can harm their descendants. In this situation, they would need the help of the actual living members of the lineage. Additionally, the solution to forebears' problems will result in the increasing comfort of life among living kin. For example, mental disease or alcoholism can be cured by explaining why ancestors after their death became harmful ghosts. Contemporarily very few Buryats have such deep knowledge of their roots. Socialism caused the shift from the relationships based on the kinship to more institutionalized forms of forming social relations, based on education or occupation. Kinship and family relations

¹⁸ *Erih* is a Buryat word for Buddhist beadroll.

¹⁹ “Buryat-Mongol Truth”.

²⁰ *Backstage. Songol. Naidal*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcDnCS3UWwA> (access: 10.08.2020).

regained their importance in the post-Soviet period. Knowledge about ancestors is a tool to obtain and maintain a collective identity as the Buryats. In the present-day shamans help in recognizing ancestors and finding the geographical localization of *toonto nyutag*. In the case of modern urban shamans, they support people in the finding of their ancestors' spirits and communicate with them (Quijada 2008: 2–3). Shamans sometimes need help in the recognizing of clients' forebears. Therefore, the people have started to use genealogical investigation in archives. In this process, amateur rural historians play an important role, writing down the lineages for their local communities (Zhanaev 2020).

The lyric of *Naidal* also critiques the values of modernity, including the education system. The number of Buryats with higher education degree was one of the highest in the USSR (Chakars 2014: 19–21). Education is still valued in Buryat society. S. Biliktuev points out: “We thought education will be a remedy for ignorance. However, we became rougher and more cynical”. Education requires the proficiency in the Russian language. Henceforth it has contributed to obliterating the knowledge of the Buryat language. The *Naidal* is also the caution against consumerism, non-reflexivity, globalization, Sovietization, and Russification. The analysed pieces of art expose history, knowledge, and religion as features of steppe man, the nomad. Hip-hop artists represent cultural Pan-Mongolism, but they find the Buryats as an independent group with its own history, identity, language, and religions.

The approach of general Buryat society towards the Buryat language has changed significantly over the last few years and now proficiency in it is perceived as valuable. In 2019, Alihan Dze published the video from his concert, which he described in following words:

If there is someone who could foresee 10 or 15 years ago, that the people in night clubs of Ulan-Ude will sing on the Buryat language? In the city where I came in 2002 from the Agin-Buryat Autonomous Okrug, in the capital city of the Buryatia, where it was a shame to speak in the native language, where strangers could stope you and scold for speaking Buryat.

The patterns of the nomad in urbanscape

The elements of the nomadic past are put into contemporary urbanscape. The brightest example is Business Centre “Arun”. The shape of this modernistic building was inspired by *chum*, a traditional Evenki domicile. It is an attempt to project original regional architectural style, as the main architect of the complex confirms. According to assumptions, the building was to become a seat for, among others, the centre of Evenki culture and The Baikal Theatre. The swelling cost of building resulted in commercialization of investment and allocation of space for business service.

The Buryats as a young urban society do not have their own architectural style. Most material heritage is inspired by Manchurian and Tibetan architecture. In the Baikal region it is also marker of the Buryat cultural space (Szmyt 2014: 214). Some elements of architecture, as for example curved roofs, are added to building in order to make them more ethnic and autochthonous. However, there is one kind of building, which is characteristic for pre-revolutionary Buryat culture, the yurt.

Nomadic tents appear in the urban space, although they no longer fulfil their original function of ensuring mobile shelter for nomads. Modern yurts serve as one of the elements of indigenous placemaking. They are often used in business enterprises, as gastronomic locales. On the outskirts of a city two-staged banquet hall is located, called Grand Yurta. Figures of Hunnic soldiers are situated at the door. This ethnic colorization is characteristic for the district of Verkhniaya Be-rezovka, which is a popular area for leisure. In the nearby neighbourhood, there is also hotel and restaurant resort called Cafe Yurt Baataray Urgo which means “the yurt of the warrior Baagatur”. These cases highlight ethnic tradition as an effective way to attract tourists as well as locals. It also reconfigures character of the city, which in turn changes from the post-Soviet to indigenous. Many localizations in Ulan-Ude allude to Buryat traditions in two ways. The first are elements of small architecture, which refer to nomadic or Buddhist traditions. The second way relates to sociolinguistic changes in the names of hotels, shops, restaurants and another services. Both of them lead Ulan-Ude to fulfil its role as a capital city of an ethnic republic.

From the beginning of the third millennium monuments of heroes from Buryat-Mongolian legends, so-called *ulighers*, were placed in many spots across the city. An excellent example is sculpture of Gesar Khan, a character from famous epic story, founded in 2006. Other sculptures present warriors or archers. Also at the front of The Buryat Business Centre there are figures of horseback archers. These elements of the symbolic urbanscape are an expression of the romanticized pattern of a nomad. It highlights the glorified great past of the Buryats and marks their cultural space.

The changes in sociolinguistic realm of the city have the same function. Over the last few years, there is an increasing amount of business ventures, which have names referring to the nomadic past. There are examples of cafeterias' names as Nayan Navaa or Nyutag. An elaborate store with ethno-souvenirs is called Zam, which means the road. This interplay game with a romanticized past is part of a marketing strategy. It deals with local resentments because nomads from the past do not exist anymore. The idea of modern nomads and discovering the rich history of nomadic civilization is especially strong within local societies.

We can notice the elements of traditional culture and identity have been incorporated into business ventures. Also, the cultural practices have been subjected to creeping commodification. It is an effect of surviving ethnicity in neoliberal

capitalism (Comaroff, Comaroff 2009: 21). It is a new feature of Buryat identity. The ethnic policy of USSR focused on controlled diversity. The modern Buryat identity becomes a brand, which can be used for monetization. Simultaneously, it has a positive impact on collective consolidation. It is a part of a worldwide process, which is present in every multi-ethnic state.

The ethnic placemaking consists not only of changes in architecture and in the sociolinguistic realm of urbanscapes. It also involves new cultural practices. Rituals like *taylagan* are organized in the places marked by the Soviet system, for example, in an ethnographic museum or hippodrome. They become areas where shamanistic traditions are returning to social life, but also where nomadic activities are put into a modern context. At the hippodrome, the municipality holds the annual *Suukharban*, a sports festival celebrating the three Buryat traditional sports: archery, wrestling and horseracing (Quijada 2008: 8). These sports were important for pre-revolutionary Buryats as a way to survive. Today, they are elements of imagined traditions, which cement the Buryat collective identity together. Urban dwellers are unlikely to know how to ride horseback, but still the horse is strong symbol, which connects past with present.

Conclusions

The article investigates the patterns of a nomad in Buryat urban culture. I decided to focus on rap music for two reasons. Firstly, rap music is perceived as urban music, which was a way to express discontent caused by various reasons: discrimination, oppression, socio-economic problems, inequalities. It is more popular among the youth than, for example, poetry or theatre. Secondly, rap lyrics were not analysed by the researchers of Buryat culture. It is still considered as a titbit by many academics. However, I think it offers fresh and innovative insight.

Rap music is created in a bottom-up process. Buryat rap thrives on elements of the ethnic revival and romanticized figure of a nomad, removes from its historical context. It constitutes a new set of symbols, which facilitate maintaining collective identity in urban conditions. Popular music is just one of the ways of transmission of this ensemble of symbols. The imagination of the nomadic life inspires the names of ethno-festivals like the most popular “Voice of Nomads”. The nomadic features of history, and native language allow Buryats to participate in the cultural Pan-Mongolian movement while preserving their own group sovereignty.

I show that the nomad present in rap music is an element of a wider process, which concerns the urbanscape of Ulan-Ude. City-dwellers play with imagining the nomadic past in their business ventures and aesthetic realm of the agglomeration. It happens by the implementation of yurts, specific kind of monuments, decorative elements of architecture and new cultural practices. The past is associated with the present, which results in changes of the urbanscape. As I noticed, the

people become part of landscape and the landscape becomes part of each individual person. Therefore, patterns of the nomad included in the urbanscape are also included in rap lyrics. The imagery of the modern, urbanized nomad resonates deeply within Buryat urbanites.

The elements characteristic for the pre-revolutionary mode of the life are divided from the original context and put into modern narration. They have become new symbols, which are used to increase awareness of Buryat ethnonational individuality. The symbols, like a hitching post or saddle, refer to an imaginary imagination about nomadic life but are set in the urban dimension, where horsemen are not common. Even though such a character has long since vanished, they have become strongly marked figures. It also occurs when used in artistic lyrics. Rap, an urban music, references ethnic traditions which results in discursive ethnicization of the urbanscape. Listeners can find elements familiar to their ancestors, which can be fruitful in the developing of ethnonational awareness by the youth who grow up in urban conditions.

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